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A
DESCRIPTION
OF THE
THE MERMAID,

Now offered to the Inspection of the Public,

WHICH WAS
FOUND ON BOARD
A NATIVE VESSEL

IN THE
Archipelago of the Malaccas,

AND
CARRIED TO BATAVIA

In a Dutch Ship,

*Where the present Proprietor purchased it at a very
considerable Price.*

LONDON:

PRINTED BY ASHBY, OSBORNE, AND ROWLAND,
56, LOMBARD STREET.

[c 1822]





The Steinman

or

Fig. III.

dyben



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DESCRIPTION
OF
THE MERMAID.

THE Mermaid now offered to the inspection of the public, was found on board a native vessel in the Archipelago of the Malaccas. A Dutch vessel carried it to Batavia, where the present Proprietor purchased it at a very considerable price.

The extreme length of the animal is about 2 feet 10 inches ; the breadth across the shoulders is $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The head is round, and forms, particularly behind, a striking similitude to that of man. The

sutures cannot be well traced through the integuments, but their existence is sufficiently indicated. The os-frontis, or fore-head, has less depth and breadth of outline than the human skull, and more than that of the Baboon. The ossa malarum, or cheek bones, are extremely high, as in the Hottentot. The eyes are large and prominent. The nose is much more elevated than in the Monkey tribe, and its advanced position more so than even in many Hottentots. The upper and lower jaws not so prominent as in the Ape, but flat, like those of the human species. The mouth is large and open, by which the teeth are exhibited; and from the incisors being worn upon the upper surface, sufficient evidence is afforded that the animal is full grown. It has four canine, eight incisors, and twelve molares. The canine teeth are

larger than in the human species. The ears are small, exactly resembling those of man, and are placed in the same situation of the head. Hairs seem to have covered the head, but now, on the back part and on the temples, there appears but a small quantity remaining; a few hairs appear on the upper lip and chin, and the body is also partially covered with hair, which is of a dark brown colour, thick, strait, and shiny, and hangs down, without any tendency to frizzle, and has a stronger resemblance to human hair than to that of any other animal. The neck is of a proportional length to the body, but being projected, and the head being thrown backward, an unnatural appearance is given to these parts; both these circumstances are evidently accidental. The countenance has a strong expression of terror, which would

lead us to believe the animal expired under great agony. The shoulders are high, and fall by a gentle declivity ; not drawn up as in the Monkey tribe. Evidently this animal has the bones called clavicles, or collar bones, which render its resemblance to the human form more remarkable. The Baboon is without them. The spine, or back-bone, has much resemblance to that of the human species. The vertebræ are very prominent, and appear to be attached in the same manner, and of which ten joints are visible. The arms are of a proportional length to the body ; the joints of which are the same as the human. The hands, fingers, and thumbs also strongly resemble those of the human body. It has two breasts, which are placed a little lower than those of woman ; and which, though now small and shrivelled, yet

must have been full and prominent when the animal was living. On the line of separation, and directly under the breasts, are two fins; and from this point, which is about 12 inches from the top of the head, all appearance of human figure ceases. The lower part resembles a large fish of the Salmon species, and is all over covered with scales, which on the body part are very small, and are scarcely perceptible, except when narrowly inspected.

On the lower part of the body it has seven fins; one dorsal, two pectoral, three ventral, and the tail. The two pectoral and two of the ventral are horizontal, and evidently formed to support the animal when it is in the attitude generally described as seen when combing its hair. And from the number and situation of the fins, together with the assistance

which the hands must give it in swimming, it appears to be completely fitted for making a rapid movement through the water.

Mermaids, till the present day, have been considered the creatures of imagination. And although some old navigators are stated to have seen and to have described such an animal, yet their relations have always been received not with doubt only, but also with ridicule. And he who would have asserted, that an animal exists in the sea, combining the appearance of the human species with that of the fish, would have been as readily believed as if he had asserted the existence of the Centaur. Such has been the state of our knowledge of this part of the creation.

We are now happily relieved from any further doubt on this subject, by the exhibition of an animal of this description in a tolerable state of preservation; and it may be but justice to the veracity of some of the old navigators to quote a few of their remarks.

In the collection of Purchas, b. 2, ch. 1, sec. 5, is an account of the first voyage of Columbus; wherein it is stated, “That sailing from Port Nativity, he saw three Mermaids leaping a good height out of the sea, creatures (as he affirmed) not so fair as they are painted, but somewhat resembling men in the face; and of which, at other times, he had seen some on the Coast of Guinea.”

In a journal of travels in Arabia, performed by Christopher Furer of Haimen-

dof, in company with Breidenbach, Baumgarten, and Bellonius, it is said, they came on the 18th November, 1565, to Thora, on the coast of the Red Sea.

“ In this city, he says, we saw a Mermaid’s skin, taken there many years before, which in the lower part ends fish-fashion ; and of the upper part only the navel and breasts remain, the arms and head being lost.”

In the second voyage, or employment, of Master Henry Hudson, for finding a passage to the East Indies by the northwest passage, written by himself, the following statement occurs.

“ 15th June, 1608, lat. 75° 7. This morning, one of our ship’s company looking overboard, saw a Mermaid, and calling of some of the company

“ one more came up ; and by that time
 “ she was come close to the ship’s side,
 “ looking earnestly on the men. A little
 “ time after a sea came, and overturned
 “ her. From the navel, upward, her
 “ back and breasts were like a woman’s,
 “ (as they say that saw her ;) her body
 “ as big as one of us ; her skin very
 “ white ; flowing hair, and hanging down
 “ behind—colour black. In her going
 “ down, they saw her tail, which was like
 “ the tail of a Porpoise, and speckled like
 “ a Mackarel. Their names that saw
 “ her, were Thomas Hills and Robert
 “ Rayner.”

In an account of Newfoundland, published by Captain Richard Whitbourn, containing his voyages thither, and observations there, is a long and particular account of a Mermaid seen by him and

several others with him, in the year 1610.

He says, “ It came swiftly swimming to-

“ wards him, looking cheerfully, as it

“ had been a woman, by the face, eyes,

“ nose, mouth, chin, ears, neck, and

“ fore-head. It had blue streaks, resem-

“ bling hairs, down the neck. It after-

“ wards dived under water, and then

“ came to a boat where his servant, Wil-

“ liam Hawkbridge, was, and tried to

“ get in ; putting its hands upon the side

“ of the boat. Hawkbridge, and others

“ in the boat, were afraid, and struck it

“ on the head, when it fell off. It came

“ afterwards to two other boats ; the men

“ in which fled to land. This, says

“ Capt. W—. I suppose was a Mermaid.

“ Now, because divers have written such

“ of Mermaids, I have presumed to state

“ what is most certain of such a strange

“ creature that was seen at Newfound-
“ land.”

It is much to be regretted that this interesting subject for natural history has not been preserved in a more perfect state. The rude hands it originally fell into, unconscious of the doubts that have so long existed, and regardless of the spirit of investigation that prompts the scientific mind, allowed it to be dried, apparently, by mere exposure to the sun; and hence, some of its principal features are not exhibited so distinctly as they would have been, if the proper means of preservation had been adopted. At the same time, a fact is indisputably established, that an animal exists which has in the upper part a form similar to the human, combining with the lower part the perfect form of a fish.

The most sceptical mind may be convinced of this fact by examining the animal now submitted to inspection—the philosopher and naturalist need no longer remain in doubt—the more minute the investigation, the more satisfactory must be the result. The object is before our eyes, and we are only left to speculate, from its various strange combinations, approaching so nearly to the human species, on what may be the habits of the Mermaid.

Uncultivated as the minds are of those from whose hands this creature was obtained, one striking circumstance is remarkable. Its resemblance to the human form created an instinctive awe—the Pagans beheld with astonishment the amalgamation of forms—they were un-

equal to the question, how far nature could operate — and, strangers to the divine revelations that have taught us to wonder at the works of creation, and to adore the Author, *they* worshipped the Mermaid as a deity.



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